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BARBIERE
RUDY

001

STEPHEN STRANGE was a brilliant neurosurgeon whose exceptional skills nearly matched his ego. When a car accident caused nerve damage in his hands, Strange scoured the globe looking for a cure to his condition. His search led him to Tibet, where he found **THE ANCIENT ONE**. Although he refused to cure Strange's condition, the Ancient One revealed to him a world of magic and power that humbled the brilliant doctor. Strange gave himself over to being the Ancient One's protégé, eventually mastering the mystic arts and becoming…

DOCTOR STRANGE
SORCERER SUPREME
IN
SELF-SURGERY

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NOW.
THE MOUNTAINS OF TIBET.

"EVERYTHING DIES."

OR SO REED RICHARDS SAYS.

EVEN IN THE FACE OF INSURMOUNTABLE OBSTACLES, I REFUSE TO ACCEPT THAT.

NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE.

BUT EVERYTHING HAS A *PRICE.*

LIFE IS SPENT *LEARNING THE COST.*

NEW YORK HOSPITAL.
THE DAYS OF RECKLESS YOUTH.

--WHICH BRINGS US TO THE HOSPICE WING. AS ASPIRING MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS, IT'S IMPORTANT YOU RECOGNIZE THAT WE ARE NOT ***MAGICIANS***. WE CAN'T SAVE EVERYONE.

I KNOW, I KNOW--YOU'RE PROBABLY THINKING I'M WRONG, THAT THIS IS ***DEFEAT***. BUT NO--SOMETIMES IT'S OUR JOB TO HELP SEE OUR PATIENTS OUT OF THIS WORLD PEACEFULLY, TO HAVE THEM ACCEPT DEATH AND THE NATURAL ORDER--

PSSSSH. NONSENSE!

DR. STRANGE... YOU'RE LATE.

I'M JUST IN TIME TO STOP YOU FROM FILLING THESE YOUNG MINDS WITH *MISINFORMATION*, DEAR.

WHAT YOUR LOVELY ADVISOR MEANS TO SAY IS THAT SOMETIMES...WE GIVE UP. SOMETIMES, WE LET DEATH WIN. AND FRANKLY? THAT IS *UNACCEPTABLE*.

STEPHEN--

I WAS IN YOUR SHOES BUT A YEAR AGO, TIMID AND AFRAID. BUT FEAR? SHE'S JUST ANOTHER ILLNESS.

AND WE ARE *DOCTORS*.

SO LET THIS VISIT BE A LESSON, YES--OF ALL THE GOOD YOU'VE YET TO ACHIEVE, IN HOW YOU MUST PUSH FURTHER...WE MUST *ALL* LEARN TO FACE THE IMPOSSIBLE.

CLASS DISMISSED.

I HAVE FACED THE IMPOSSIBLE. I HAVE SEEN THE OTHER SIDE, WHERE GOOD AND EVIL MEAN NOTHING.

I DO NOT FEAR THE IMPOSSIBLE.

I WELCOME IT...*WITH OPEN EYES.*

AND WITH THE GREAT EYE...ALL IS REVEALED.

GODS... WHAT MANNER OF ENTRY IS THIS?

WELCOME, DR. STRANGE.

THIS PLACE IS... UNCANNY.

YES, SINCE YOU WERE LAST HERE WE HAVE EMBRACED MODERNITY IN A WAY THAT SOME MAY FIND...*UNCONVENTIONAL*.

OUR ORDER HAS ALWAYS BEEN FASCINATED BY THE SCIENCES...ARCANE AND OTHERWISE.

PERHAPS WE ARE TOO CURIOUS, WHICH HAS LED TO OUR CURRENT PREDICAMENT.

ALL KNOWLEDGE HAS ITS PRICE. WHY HAVE YOU SUMMONED ME?

THIS WAY, DOCTOR. I WILL EXPLAIN *EVERYTHING*.

WE BELIEVE IN PROGRESS, IN HARNESSING THE POWER OF SCIENCE AND EVOLUTION TO PROPEL OURSELVES...WE BELIEVE IN *CHANGE*.

THERE IS A BEAUTY IN THE UNKNOWN, AS WELL AS DANGER. WE MUST KEEP TO OUR LIMITS...TO WHAT'S NECESSARY.

IT'S BEEN YEARS SINCE THE GREAT SORCERER SUPREME FIRST SOUGHT SANCTUARY HERE. I SENSE YOU HAVE ALSO CHANGED, STEPHEN.

I HAVE SIMPLY EMBRACED THAT WHICH I MUST BE, OLD FRIEND.

OH? AND WHAT IS THAT?

WHAT IS NECESSARY.

PERHAPS YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED SO MUCH AFTER ALL.

OUR QUEST FOR KNOWLEDGE TAKES US TO NEW PLACES. WE HAVE BROADENED OUR HORIZONS BEYOND THIS PLANE OF REALITY-- WE'VE VENTURED INTO THE TERRA INCOGNITA OF THE DIMENSIONAL FOLD.

I HAVE... *EXPERIENCE* WITH SUCH THINGS.

WE WERE NOT PREPARED FOR WHAT WE FOUND. IT WAS BEYOND OUR CONTROL...STEPHEN, ***SOMETHING*** CAME THROUGH. SOMETHING ***TERRIBLE***.

THIS DEMON... IT ESCAPED FROM OUR TEMPLE AND SOUGHT OUT THE VILLAGE BELOW. IT DESTROYED EVERYTHING IN ITS PATH, SLAUGHTERING THE TOWNSFOLK BEFORE WE COULD ARRIVE TO HELP.

WHEN WE ARRIVED, WE MADE A TERRIBLE DISCOVERY... IT WASN'T JUST A DEMON--IT WAS A ***PARASITE***.

...AND IT HAD TAKEN TO ONE OF OUR OWN.

SHE'S... JUST A GIRL...

PRINCESS PHAN IS *NOT* JUST ANY GIRL...SHE IS OUR GREATEST PUPIL, DAUGHTER OF AN EMPEROR, SENT HERE TO LEARN FROM US. IT IS BEYOND A TRAGEDY...

"THE PRINCESS WAS VISITING THE VILLAGE BELOW, HELPING THE VILLAGERS...SHE IS IMMENSELY POWERFUL, IT MAKES SENSE THAT THE DEMON WOULD SEEK HER OUT.

"WE...WE FEAR THEY CANNOT BE SEPARATED.

"WE NEED YOU, STRANGE. THIS GIRL... IF THE DEMON TAKES CONTROL OF HER, SHE WILL BURN THE WORLD."

WE CAN BARELY CONTAIN HER ON THE ASTRAL PLANE--WE KNOW OF YOUR EXPERTISE IN SUCH MATTERS--

I'VE HEARD ENOUGH.

SEAL THE CHAMBER.

--HIGHLY INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR. I KNOW YOU'RE FULL OF YOURSELF, STEPHEN, BUT MY STUDENTS WERE NOT HERE TO LEARN ARROGANCE, BUT *HUMILITY*.

THERE IS NO HUMILITY IN *WEAKNESS*. I'VE MANAGED TO SAVE EVERY ONE OF MY PATIENTS, AND I CERTAINLY HAVEN'T DONE SO BY ACCEPTING OUR INABILITY TO ACT.

YOUR UNENDING DESIRE TO HELP IS PART OF WHAT MAKES YOU SO SPECIAL...BUT YOU HAVE TO ACCEPT THE REALITIES OF OUR PROFESSION. OF *LIFE*. YOU NEED THIS LESSON MORE THAN MY STUDENTS.

I THINK WE'RE QUITE DONE HERE. IF YOU DO EXCUSE--

NO, NO-- WE'VE ARRIVED. THIS IS WHY I BROUGHT YOU HERE.

CLASS IS NOW IN SESSION, DR. STRANGE.

AUNTIE MARTHA!

MARTHA. GOOD TO SEE YOU.

IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU, TOO, COLIN. HOW'RE YOU FEELING?

I'M... *FINE*. WHO'S THIS?

THIS IS MY... FRIEND, DOCTOR STEPHEN STRANGE. HE'S A NEURO-SURGEON.

GOD KNOWS I'VE MET ENOUGH OF THOSE IN MY LIFE, HA! BUT YOU WIN SOME, YOU LOSE SOME, EH, STRANGE?

YES, UM, I SUPPOSE YOU DO.

SO, WHAT CAN A DYING MAN DO FOR YOU?

I JUST WANTED TO MAKE SURE YOU WERE COMFORTABLE, THAT YOU HAD EVERYTHING YOU NEED.

YOU'RE A DOLL, BUT I'M FINE. ME AN' BILLY ARE JUST WATCHING SOME TV.

I...I WANT TO BE WITH DADDY... BEFORE...

HEY, HEY! NONE OF THAT NOW!

I'M SORRY TO INTERRUPT YOU TWO. I'M GLAD YOU'RE DOING WELL, COL--MAKE SURE TO TELL TRISH I SAID--

EXCUSE ME, YOU SAID YOU HAVE A TUMOR AT THE BASE OF THE SKULL?

INOPERABLE AS THEY COME, DR. STRANGE. BUT I'VE MADE MY PEACE, AND MARTHA HAS BEEN A HELL OF A ROCK.

YOU'RE SO STRONG. I'LL BE BACK SOON--BE WITH YOUR SON!

THANKS FOR STOPPING BY, HON.

DON'T WORRY, BILLY. I'M GOING TO FIX YOUR DAD. JUST YOU WAIT AND SEE.

YOU...YOU PROMISE?

YOU HAVE MY WORD.

YES...YES, I SUPPOSE IT IS...

THAT IS WHAT ACCEPTANCE LOOKS LIKE--PEACE. IT'S THE GREATEST GIFT WE CAN GIVE, STEPHEN.

THE ROOM IS EERILY QUIET, ALMOST PEACEFUL.

BUT BENEATH THE DULCET TONES OF CHANTING AND BREATH, I CAN HEAR THEM.

SCREAMING OUT, SUFFERING-- FIGHTING FOR THEIR LIVES.

AND SO I REACH BEYOND THIS MORTAL VESSEL...

TO THE ASTRAL PLANE!

BY THE HOARY HOSTS OF HOGGOTH!

AND WHAT MANNER OF FOUL THING ARE YOU?

TINY MAN... YOU STINK OF OTHER WORLDS.

I WILL DESTROY YOU!

YOU WILL BE GONE, PARASITE. I AM *THE DOCTOR*, AND I'VE COME TO--

HELP ME

HELP ME

HELP ME

ARRGH!

OH YES, THIS SHALL BE AMUSING.

GRAWR!

BE GONE, PUNY FLESHLINGS!

HALT! WITH THE POWER OF *AGAMOTTO*, I BID YOU BE *STILL!*

ENOUGH OF THESE GAMES--YOU MUST ABANDON YOUR HOST OR SUFFER DESTRUCTION AT MY HANDS.

OH, SORCERER, IF ONLY THINGS WERE SO SIMPLE. TWO ARE NOW ONE...IF YOU ARE TO DESTROY ME, YOU DESTROY THE GIRL AS WELL.

HELLLLP MEE....

SHE IS PART OF ME NOW. IF YOU ARE WILLING TO SACRIFICE HER, YOU MAY PROCEED.

WILL YOU TAKE AN INNOCENT LIFE TO CONTAIN ME?

"DARE YOU BE SO BOLD, SORCERER?"

...YES, YES... THE GAMMA KNIFE WOULD WORK...

STEPHEN? WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN UP TO IN HERE?

MARTHA, MY DEAR--I WANTED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT--

IS...IS THAT *COLIN*?! YOU *STOLE* HIS *CHART*?!

I CAN *FIX* HIM. I'VE REACHED OUT TO COLIN'S FAMILY--THEY'VE GIVEN ME THEIR BLESSING TO PROCEED. THE GAMMA KNIFE RESEARCH HAS YIELDED AN AMAZINGLY PRECISE SURGICAL METHOD THAT CAN EXTRACT THE MOST--

OH, STEPHEN, STEPHEN--YOU TRULY ARE LOST IN YOUR HUBRIS. HOW COULD YOU DO THIS? EXPERIMENTAL SURGERY? AT *THIS* STAGE? THIS ISN'T WHAT HE WANTED--

I HAVE GIVEN THIS MAN *HOPE*. HE WANTS HIS LIFE BACK, AND I WILL--

YOU'VE *STOLEN* THEIR PEACE, STEPHEN. AND WHAT OF ME? I'M THE ONE WHO HAD HIM MOVED TO HOSPICE...WOULD YOU DISMISS MY DIAGNOSIS? DISCREDIT MY PROFESSIONAL OPINION?

THIS IS FOR YOU, MARTHA! WHY CAN'T YOU SEE THE GOOD IN WHAT I'M DOING?!

WHY CAN'T YOU ACCEPT THAT SOME THINGS ARE BEYOND EVEN YOUR SKILLS?

"WHY CAN'T YOU ACCEPT THE IMPOSSIBLE?"

NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE.

EVERYTHING HAS A PRICE.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE STRONG AND THE WEAK IS AS SIMPLE AS WHO IS WILLING TO PAY...

TO GIVE *EVERYTHING* THEY ARE FOR EVEN THE SLIGHTEST HOPE OF VICTORY.

I HAVE GIVEN MYSELF TO THE DARKNESS. I HAVE PAID IN FULL.

I AM *THE DOCTOR.*

AND I *WILL NOT BE DENIED.*

FWA

ASH

THE MUNTU SPLITTING OF THE SELF. SUCH MAGIC... WHAT HAVE YOU SACRIFICED FOR THIS POWER?

I HAVE... GIVEN... ALL.

AND I WILL NOT LOSE!

IN... INCREDIBLE...

NO!

ENOUGH!

CRUNCH!

ARRRRGH!

YOU'VE GOT SCARS...YOU'RE NOT WELL, DOCTOR. YOU HAVE TO STOP HOLDING BACK IF YOU HOPE TO SURVIVE.

MUST... CONSOLIDATE ENERGY.

MUST... WIN.

I KNOW YOUR KIND, PARASITE... I'VE HAD SOMEONE IN MY MIND. I WILL NOT STAND FOR SUCH VIOLATIONS!

NO MATTER THE COST!

BLOOD MAGIC? YOU REALLY HAVE GIVEN YOUR SOUL...

YOU PLAY A DANGEROUS GAME, SORCERER... BUT WILL IT BE ENOUGH?

YOUR SIZE IS NO LONGER AN ISSUE.

THE ODDS ARE EVEN.

NOW FACE ME!

FACE THE SORCERER SUPREME!

ARRGH!

NOW... YOU...SHALL... SUFFER!

THE BINDING CHAINS OF VALTORR CANNOT BE BROKEN.

HAVE YOU LOST YOUR TONGUE? WHERE ARE YOUR TAUNTS NOW, DEMON?!

KILL US. END IT. YOU ARE...MORE POWERFUL.

BUT CAN YOU DO WHAT FATE REQUIRES OF YOU? CAN YOU BE RESPONSIBLE FOR TAKING THIS INNOCENT LIFE?

ARE YOU EXCITED, AUNTIE? DADDY'S GONNA BE ALL BETTER!

YOUR FATHER IS STRONG, BILLY...NO MATTER WHAT, HE'S SO STRONG, AND YOU KNOW HE LOVES YOU VERY MUCH...

M-MARTHA...

YOU WERE RIGHT...I COULDN'T...I'M NOT--

WHERE'S DADDY? CAN I SEE HIM?

HE...HE'S GONE, BILLY... HE DIDN'T MAKE IT...

MY DADDY...?

YOU PROMISED! *LIAR!*

I'VE NEVER... I'VE NEVER LOST A PATIENT--I CAN'T--

THIS ISN'T ABOUT *YOU*...GOD, WHY CAN'T YOU SEE THAT?

THAT MAN...HIS FAMILY...YOU KNEW THE RISK, BUT YOU ACTED ANYWAY. YOU EXPLOITED THEIR HOPE, AND NOW YOU'VE DESTROYED THEIR PEACE.

I JUST HOPE YOU CAN NOW ACCEPT YOUR LIMITS. YOU'LL LIVE WITH THIS MISTAKE *FOREVER*...I PRAY YOU LEARN FROM IT.

EVERYTHING HAS A PRICE, STEPHEN. *EVERYTHING.*

"IT'S HIGH TIME YOU *PAID!*"

I WILL NOT DESTROY YOU, DEMON.

THEN... WHAT?

I OFFER YOU AN ALTERNATIVE.

A NEW HOST.

MYSELF, IN EXCHANGE FOR THE GIRL'S LIFE.

--WHAT IS THIS?!

I WILL TEAR THIS UNIVERSE APART! THIS VESSEL WILL GRANT ME--

YESSSS... THE POWER... THE POWER--

I ACCEPT, HUMAN! WITH YOUR POWER, THE MORTAL WORLD WILL BE MINE!

THIS IS NOT OUR AGREEMENT! LET ME OUT!

GARRGHHHH!

IS THIS WHAT YOU WANTED? TO BE A PART OF ME?

NO...IT'S WRONG... HOW CAN THIS--!

COME. JOIN ME.

NOOOO!

SHE.... SHE'S ALIVE! BUT HOW? THE DEMON...

I HAVE... TAKEN HIM INSIDE ME. HE IS...NO LONGER A THREAT.

GET AWAY, GET AWAY!

THE FORBIDDEN SPELLS...BLOOD MAGIC!

YOU...YOU ARE THE REAL DEMON HERE! SUCH AN ACT...IT IS... UNHOLY! WHAT ARE YOU?!

I AM...THE DOCTOR.

YOU ARE UNWELCOME TO RETURN, STRANGE. YOUR DARK ARTS HAVE BROUGHT A FOUL AIR HERE.

YOUR PRINCESS HAS BEEN RETURNED TO YOU.

AT WHAT COST, STEPHEN? TAKING ALL THAT EVIL INTO YOU... WHAT HAVE YOU BECOME?

WHAT WAS NEEDED. WHAT WAS *NECESSARY*.

GOODBYE, OLD FRIEND.

I HAVE SEEN THINGS YOU COULD NOT IMAGINE.

I HAVE BEEN WHERE DEMONS FEAR TO TREAD.

I HAVE BECOME WHAT THIS WORLD REQUIRES OF ME.

NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE, BUT ONLY FOR THOSE WHO KNOW THE PRICE...

...AND I HAVE PAID DEARLY.

ZONE